

Representative

35th District

Serving Mason County
and parts of Grays Harbor,
Kitsap and Thurston counties

**Peggy
Johnson**



1997 End-of-Session Report

Dear friends,

I am excited and pleased to report to you that we completed one of the most productive, far-sighted, remarkable sessions anyone around Olympia can remember. We made historic, common-sense reforms in several areas of the law that will make government more accountable, efficient and responsive to you, the people it serves. And we did it without a special session, the first time in 40 years that the Legislature has adjourned on time in a budget-writing year.

Having a Republican majority in both the House and Senate for the first time in 14 years, we recognized a unique opportunity and planned our legislative agenda a month before the session began in January. We worked hard during the session, often discouraged by the governor's free-wheeling veto pen. But we never gave up, and we accomplished every major objective we set for ourselves. Every objective was designed to make life better for the citizens of Washington state. Please read about our accomplishments inside.

Please Contact Me At:

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360-786-7966

Toll-free Hotline:

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e-mail:

johnson_pe@leg.wa.gov

Committees:

Education (chairman)
Transportation Policy and Budget

Need a Speaker?

If you belong to a group that needs a speaker on state government issues, please call my Olympia office at 360-786-7966. If possible, I'd like to help you.

We have turned the corner for Washington state. We are moving in the right direction. Taxpayers and citizens come first, not the establishment. We are listening to your values and your priorities and making them the state's. We're bucking the status quo to remake government that works for you.

So I encourage you to continue talking to us and writing us. Tell me what you think. Or ask questions about the issues (remember, much of the "news" you read in big papers or see on TV doesn't cover the issues in detail). Your knowledge and involvement make the difference.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peggy Johnson".

Peggy Johnson
Representative, 35th District



Welfare reform

No other legislative accomplishment better represents how we have responded to your values than the changes we enacted in our welfare system. We approved historic reforms that make two of the most noble American values the law's centerpiece: work and personal responsibility.

For the first time in the 60-year history of welfare, recipients of public assistance will now be required to work or seek work in order to qualify. Benefits will run out in five years, so people will be required to take personal responsibility for their own welfare rather than becoming dependent on government.

Those who work themselves up the economic ladder and into self-sufficiency will receive child care assistance on the way up if they need it -- in addition to their cash grants. Those who can't find work will receive an assessment to determine what they need to become employed. Then, with the state's help, they will be required to take those steps until they find work.

Teen-age parents will be required to live at home or with a responsible adult and to finish school. To reduce the welfare rolls, non-custodial parents will be required to pay court-ordered child support or risk suspension of their driver's or other licenses.

Education

Being chair of the House Education Committee has been an exciting and rewarding experience — one that I will always remember. With the help of our colleagues in the Senate, we sent almost 25 education bills to the governor that were part of our **ADCs of Education** package: **A**cademics, **D**iscipline, **C**ommunity Involvement and **C**hoice.

We believe a stronger emphasis needs to be put on basic academics: reading, writing, math, science, history. We must create an atmosphere where teachers can teach, students can learn, and parents and the community can guide their students and schools.

Included in our legislation were measures to improve basic reading skills of primary grade students; give teachers, administrators and communities more say in how to best run their schools; provide the schools with more ability to have safe and disciplined classrooms; and return to parents the authority to make certain decisions about their child's education.

The governor has signed several pieces of education legislation, including reading and discipline bills. We will continue building on our successes.

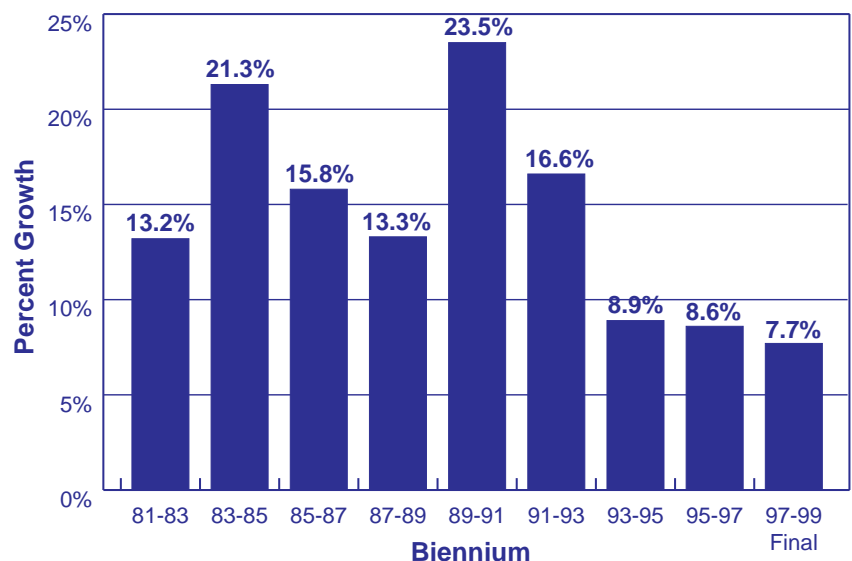
State budget

My colleagues and I firmly believe you deserve to keep and spend more of the money you earn and send less to Olympia. The 1997-1999 state budget we approved reflects that philosophy. It contains nearly \$414 million in property tax and other tax reductions — returning your money to you.

It also contains the smallest increase in spending in 25 years: 7.7 percent. The \$19.073 billion budget is \$112 million under the spending limit defined by Initiative 601. Because future spending limits are based on current spending, staying below the limit means we will save taxpayers at least \$804 million over the next six years.

Our general-fund budget puts K-12 education first: \$8.9 billion. It increases spending \$168 per pupil while funding salary increases and program en-

General Fund Expenditures
Biennial Percent Growth



hancements, such as technology acquisitions, discretionary money for classrooms, and more instructional materials, valued at \$363 million.

Our budget also funds 6,390 additional college slots and increases the amount of student aid available.

Juvenile justice reform

This landmark legislation corrects a 20-year-old mistake that made our laws governing juvenile crime too lax and ineffective. This far-reaching reform will reduce juvenile crime that has skyrocketed, making our communities less safe while other crime rates have fallen.

We gave prosecutors and judges the tools to make certain that every juvenile who breaks the law will face consequences for their actions, beginning with the first offense, no matter what the crime. We will utilize stricter punishment, along with prevention, intervention and rehabilitation programs, to reach youngsters early and help them get their lives back on track before they become repeat, more violent offenders. And because of this new law, we will finally send the most dangerous, violent juvenile criminals through the adult justice system where they'll be subject to longer sentences and the "Three Strikes and You're Out" law.

Growth management

To help ensure that single-family housing remains affordable and available to families, the Legislature adopted common-sense changes to the 1990 Growth Management Act that allow local governments to designate sufficient areas to meet projected growth. Under our new law, they must regularly evaluate their growth management plans to determine if the needs are being met.

I think these are steps in the right direction, but they are just tweakings that don't go far enough to return local control to growth management. Unfortunately, Gov. Locke threatened to veto real reforms, so we must reevaluate how we can accomplish our goals next session.

I worked with the committee considering this legislation to allow expansion of small business in rural areas. I would like local governments to have more



authority and flexibility in allowing such expansions, but unfortunately, the governor insisted the regional growth management hearings boards retain that authority.

Transportation

Our \$3.3 billion transportation budget for the 1997-1999 biennium is smaller than the last two state transportation budgets. However, it does contain funding for the following local projects:

- \$234,000 to construct collision reduction features at the Sand Hill Road intersection with SR 300 near Belfair
- \$115,000 to do engineering to construct additional lanes and a signal on SR 3 near Belfair
- \$490,000 to widen the Mud Bay bridge on highway 101 near Olympia
- \$997,000 to construct safety features on highway 101 south of Potlach in the vicinity of Reservation Road to SR 106

Flood control

I was successful in obtaining \$200,000 in the state budget to continue work begun last year on the pilot flood control project on the Skokomish River. Of the \$250,000 allocated in last year's budget, only \$50,000 was spent before permits could be obtained

and the window for work in the river closed. The \$200,000 in this year's budget reallocates the remaining money for the next biennium.

Dentistry for low-income children

As a children's advocate, I worked to secure \$200,000 in the state budget to help retired dentists treat economically disadvantaged children. The money will pay for liability insurance, the lack of which currently prevents dentists from volunteering their time for needy children.

Town halls

Rep. Tim Sheldon and I have planned two town halls to give you and us a chance to discuss state and local issues. I hope you will attend one of these informal, free discussions.

- **June 18 in Bremerton**
Cascade Natural Gas Building, Conference Room
6313 Kitsap Way
Bremerton
1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.
- **June 24 in McCleary**
Beehive Retirement Center
401 W. Maple St.
McCleary
1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

ActionGram

Please tell me what's on your mind: questions, comments, suggestions. I need your input to represent your views. Use this space to write me, then clip this out and mail it to me.

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